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THE CRAYON.

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[WHOLE NO. LII.]

DIJ MAJORES AC MINORES.

In our devotion to Art, there will necessarily be some qualities in it which we shall cherish above others, according to our proper idiosyncratic looking at Nature, and by the dignity of those qualities characterizing the artist's work, will be his rank before the world. The man who is gifted with the rarest and deepest sight will be most valued by his fellows, when reverence of mere power has not blinded them, just as far as they are capable of appreciating his truthfulness. All things in Nature are equally true, equally *necessary* to the universal perfection, but not of equal position and dignity, in that perfected result. There is no minor fact which has not its weight and influence, by no means to be lost sight of; no object which has not its own ideal to be always aimed at, but there are greater ones which are more worthy study, and which compensate our labors more fully. There is indeed a broad distinction to be drawn, not always, perhaps, to be clearly defined, but clearly enough to be readily followed, between facts and truths, the former being the individual instances exemplifying the law, the full expression of which constitutes the former. Thus the peculiar form of a single oak-leaf is a fact; but the universal angularity of oak-leaves, their general obedience to one law of formation, is a truth; the lightness and flexibility of a single leaf, a fact; the openness and looseness of foliage, as a mass, a truth. The presence of a certain kind of lichen on a particular rock is a fact; but when we learn that that lichen only occurs on that kind of rock, we have discovered a truth, and so through the whole range of Nature.

The instinctive recognition of this distinction has led to much confusion and waste of labor among artists, owing to a partial development of it, and a confusion of the ideas of necessity, which is not comparative, but imperative *always*, and worth, which is comparative through an infinity of degrees. Certain truths, which the general feeling of men determines to be of greater dignity, claim the attention of the artist especially, and perhaps justly so—the fault lies not in admitting greater worth to one thing, but in denying the necessity of another. Thus we all feel the value of the great truth of sunlight, and acknowledge it to be the crowning glory of the landscape, but the sunlight is expressed by a multitude of minor facts, and to its *perfect* rendering every fact is essential—each par-

ticular opposition of light and shade, each interlacing shadow or sparkling light has a word to add to the story, and none may be silenced or disregarded. There is not only the sun in the open heaven, but there is the sparkle on each leaf, and the sharp shadow behind each pebble, and if it may be in certain cases admissible to suggest the sunlight by the boldest conventionalism, as by Titian with his black rays, and though the truth of it is conveyed by the slightest intelligent treatment, there is no part or portion of the scene which does not manifest some phenomenon of sunlight, and which, therefore, cannot be neglected in a complete landscape.

It is not indeed necessary that each oak-leaf should have its form studied out in a picture, or that the particular lichen which happened in Nature should be given to the particular rock, but it is absolutely so that oak-leaves should be felt as such entirely, and that the lichen of granite should never be attributed to the limestone; and the only sure way of arriving at the truths of creation is by carefully studying the *facts* which occur to our sight. It is perfectly true that we cannot do *all* that Nature does, but do not let us be guilty of the self-deception of making *our* ability to comply with her demands, the measure of the compliance which is desirable from those who are more highly endowed with perception and power of execution than we happen to have been. It is conceivable that an artist may be gifted with keenness of sight, and intensity of purpose, sufficient to enable him to paint more minutely than *our* eyes can follow, the details of Nature, and that yet he shall keep these in their proper subordination and deference to the grand truths, and that after him another shall come, to whom the work of the former shall seem coarse and incomplete, and who will see many truths, where his predecessor saw only one. There is a limit to the power of every one in any direction, but let us not believe that the height of our reaching is the highest attainable point, or that it is useless for men to go deeper than we can, neither ignoring the existence of higher truths than we can comprehend, nor despising the recognition of what seem to us microscopic truths. If we build a temple to Apollo, let us not forget that another may, without presumption, build to Jupiter, and others still, to Pan and Ceres.

But the course of modern painting generally, seems to us most injudicious in this respect. Artists feel vaguely certain noble truths, which they call, because they *only*

feel them vaguely, sentiment, and to the attainment of these, because they comprehend that they are nobler than the mere facts of existence, they devote themselves—they study wholes, forgetting that they are only aggregates of particulars, and that what they call the sentiment of Nature is no more than the true relation between her members. They may be forgiven for ignoring what is above their comprehension, but not for neglecting the subordinate truths which do come within their range. Amateurs and critics generally, incapable of judging of facts, or truths beyond a certain range of feeling, foster this tendency of artists by their approval of the broad and masterly way of treating subjects, which means only a way so careless of close thought, or minute observation, that it demands neither knowledge or mental labor to fathom the picture: and the cant expression, that the general rendering of truth is all that is necessary, and that it matters not how this is attained, is only a kind of slipshod morality, assuming that truth is attainable by falsehood, and, in effect, by destroying the lower orders of truth, declaring that there are no degrees of worthiness in it, and finally bringing Art to this stand, that it does not matter what is painted; one thing is as good as another, if so be that it be painted in this masterly manner—in short, that it does not matter which of the gods we build to—Pan is as good as Jupiter. But the just worshipper of truth holds all degrees of it in respect, and finds that only by paying due regard to the mere facts, can he render to higher truths their proper dignity.

But in the drawing of the distinction between fact and truth, we may have *seemed* to admit that the former is not necessary, since the perfect truth is all that is requisite. In order to explain this, let us return to our oak-leaves. The particular form which a leaf may assume is, within certain limits, a matter of accident, and no two leaves will be precisely alike. Now, each leaf is a fact, and contains the essential statement of what an oak-leaf should be, excepting certain imperfections peculiar to the individual, and the result of accident; and the absolute truth of the oak-leaf is the form which gives all its essential characteristics without any of those accidental imperfections. If we could find a leaf absolutely perfect, it would be no less a fact, and would also express the truth perfectly. It is thus that the aggregate of the facts express the truth, and thus that no man learns truth except from the very closest

and most thoughtful study of facts. Truth is essential to the perfect result, fact to the perception of truth, and, as in one sense, each truth comes to be a fact in reference to a higher and more comprehensive truth; there is established a progressive series from the lowest fact to the highest truth of which series, the art of any given artist occupies probably but small space, but in which space nothing may be omitted without detracting from the perfection of his works.

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF AN ARTIST.

BY JACK TUPPER.

NO. VI.

(Reminiscences Continued.)

We students of Greek Art, in the Elgin Room, regarded with ineffable contempt the poor benighted Townleyites. To begin—to vegetate there until they should attain some growth, was intelligible; but how they could stagnate in the *Pontine marsh*, when clear-eyed Danaë were waiting to hand them to the *Aeropoli* into fair air, was extraordinary!

We passed through their ranks every morning, neither looking to the right nor the left, and walked directly into Greece. I had some position in that country:—anatomist in ordinary to Theseus. Neither was my class inattentive while I lectured on the knee of this worthy, or pointed out some undiscovered tendon, or hitherto undreamed of ligament. We were philosophers investigating *nature*. These were not factitious products, whereof the amount is known. We believed in the *infinite marble*, doubting not that muscles might reveal themselves on Thursday which defied our scrutiny on Tuesday. We made *discoveries* in the Theseus; laid our hands on the awful shoulders, between the great collar-bones, and felt for the beating of his heart.

That "arch of the ribs," as it is called, which, wise moderns say, the ancients exaggerated purposely (they confound Greeks and Romans under that name), was *not* the arch of the ribs, but a "marking," or irregular curve, compounded of several segments, now bone, now muscle, and now tendon, misunderstood by the Romans, and therefore misrepresented by them. Then the "Greek arm" moved from the sternum, the Pectoral leaped from the chest, and when one arm is advanced and the other brought back, as in the Theseus, from all along the right side of the sternum, the Pectoral flies forward to the arm, veiling the rib-heads beneath it; while, on the sternum's left, where the Pectoral fibres are strained over the chest as the left arm draws them back—there the rib-heads are discovered; and you fancy the marble is harder there. Sometimes a fashionable drawing-master, strolling round the Gallery, would vouchsafe a word of instruction. I appealed to one as an authority whereby to confirm these views, and asked him the cause of this want of symmetry at the sternum of the Theseus, as also of the fuller pronunciation of the ribs on one side the chest than on the other, which appeared

in other Greek works, but which I never met with in Roman. He replied, to my miserable discomfiture, "That probably in Greek works, which were more ancient than Roman, the marble was worn more on that side than on the other." I thanked him, not troubling him further. He soon went to the Townley students, and leaving the seeds of his sagacity in that soil, they rose up some time after to confute me. Some of these gentlemen would advocate the "Stump," others the "Point;" some were for French clalk, others for Italian; some for a plumbline, others for none. "A knowledge of anatomy," they said, "was indispensable; the muscles, and the ends of the bones; but as to fasciæ and aponeuroses, they were for surgeons, and better left alone." I was for anatomy more than ever, declaring that a *little* was dangerous. Anatomy and Perspective, I said, were the grammar of the Art. The students might call it mechanical, but what was their pains-taking about crayons, and stumps, and stretching-frames? "I work by *feeling*, somehow," said one of these impulsive ones,—"you work by *science* and *rule*." "Not entirely," I said, "and when I design, and whistle, and make verses, I sometimes forget rules altogether; but the next time you use the plumbline, I advise you to shut both your eyes." Even the Townleyites gave it against him: so I was victor for that day. And I maintained this ascendancy a long time after, till one evening, in the flush of my triumph—I had been striding about with Galt, tonguing anatomical—in came this very student at a moment when my friend, who had just applied his stethoscope to the chest of the Theseus, was listening gravely at the end of it. "Healthy," he said, looking from the student towards me, "and proves the pathology of the Greeks?" Diabolical laughter rang through the building: Galt would have reinstated me, but it was too late. He ruined the cause of anatomy from that hour; and often would these incorrigible scoffers come, while I was at work, and laying their greasy heads on the chest of my statue, pronounce the words "*healthy, &c.*" and the old infernal laughers recommenced!

I worked away, notwithstanding the jeers of the students, and in the same spirit. The marbles in the Elgin Room were miserably placed, the light falling on both sides of them, and shifting with the sun so fast as to render morning and afternoon study from the same statue impossible. Boughton was my morning companion while I was modelling the Iliissus. He was one whom I had converted from Rome, and took a curious interest in, on account of a contra-artistic business-like prudence which, blending with a true love for Art, made him, to me, incomprehensible. Talking as he would be of "connexions," "scales of prices," and "establishing himself," I liked him notwithstanding; and began to be uneasy when this most diligent of students had been absent for some days now, his drawing of the Neptune (Poseidon, we called it) not finished, and he not one to change his mind. Going into the dark regions of Townley to enquire, I almost passed a great canvas behind which the deluded creature stood, brandishing his brush, and doing a Bacchus, in monochrome. He had been at it for days too, and the

thing was nearly finished. "Fallen back to Rome?" I said. "Thou didst run well!" and he laughed, I thought, very irreverently. "Tis an order," he whispered, "I return to Poseidon to-morrow." "Yes," I said, "but it is restored by Nollekeus—and you have copied the restorations!" "An order, an order, my dear fellow!—'strong necessity,' you know; and I've laughed myself ill for my punishment to see you pass every morning, for four days, without finding me out. I knew where you were, but thought it would be tempting the gods to visit you out of this region,—noli me tangere!—I take a warm bath to-night."

Not long after this, I began to prepare for the Academy. There was no debating as to "subject," with the Theseus before me: though of late the Iliissus had seemed quite its equal; but then this last was a fragment. The Theseus, far from entire, was too perfect, I thought, in another sense, to be rejected by the Academy, though friends hinted the danger of my experiment, and suggested the "Drunk Fawn," as a subject more likely to succeed. This I utterly negated as a "beast of a thing that no sober Christian would look at;" and went on with my model for a fortnight, till informed, in so many words, that the council of the Academy demanded a *figure, not a part of one*; and that this would not be received. I yielded, resistance being useless; resolving, however, to finish my Theseus, and to select at leisure from the Townley Gallery something less execrable than the "Drunk Fawn." For the Townleyites, who, quoting Byron, said the Elgin Room was all "misshapen monuments and maimed antiques" were right, as to the last: there was not a perfect figure to be found there. My choice was "Hobson's;" and having fixed upon the Discobolos of Myron as the most Greek thing in the place, though this was far from "Phidian," it only remained to summon resolution, and return, humbled and compromised, to the society of those Townleyites. I did so at last;

"And strait a barbarous noise environed me,
Of owls, and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs!"

The yelping, the mocking, and the hooting! I had learned professional patience; and told them that, if they were really glad I had "reconsidered Human Art," I was glad also. It was all over in a day; and my Basso of Discobolos went on.

The museum is a good school of Art, and likewise a good school for the artist. Here are turbulent days for the public, and intervening silent ones for the student. But the student can, if he will, work on both these days. He can measure the popular capacity for Art by listening to group after group that will successively gather about him. Their voices will fall on his ear as peremptorily as rain on his head; he cannot demand patience, cannot suspend judgment, cannot defer execution; the palm or the axe is lifted behind him; but *which* he knows not, till it falls.

While his hands are busy on the paper, he is painting pictures somewhere else; he lays in the shadow of an arm, and knows the voice that calls it "so much black," will never applaud his "entombment." Shadowy entombments will not suit the people